

HARBOR SHORES

Chipping in for Promise Foundation

PGA contributes \$75K for education efforts

By **LOUISE WREGG**
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BENTON HARBOR — The Benton Harbor Promise Foundation gained a \$75,000 boost Thursday from the PGA of America at The Golf Club at Harbor Shores in Benton Harbor.

“This is wonderful,” Benton Harbor schools Superintendent Leonard Seawood said after the morning presentation. “This is an opportunity of a lifetime for students in Benton Harbor. This could be a game changer – giving them the opportunity after they graduate to pursue a career right out of high school ... or go to college.”

The presentation was made during a media event to showcase changes made to the course in preparation for the 2016 Senior PGA Championship.

The Senior PGA Championship Director Ryan Ogle said the PGA of America puts on a lot of championships, but there’s something special about putting one on in Benton Harbor.

“It’s bigger than just a golf championship,” he said shortly before presenting the check to the Benton Harbor Promise Foundation. “... It’s about moving this community forward. I hope when our time here is over, we can look back and say the PGA made a difference.”

He said the PGA has given almost \$400,000 to the local community in the past few years.

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From left, Isiah Newson, recipient of the Dr. John M. Proos Volunteer of the Year award, Ryan Ogle, Championship Director for the Senior PGA Championship, and Michael Todman, Chairman of the Benton Harbor Promise Foundation, pose with a check for \$75,000 made out to the Benton Harbor Promise Foundation from the PGA of America. The presentation was made Thursday during a media event held at The Golf Club at Harbor Shores in Benton Harbor to showcase enhancements made to the course in preparation for the 2016 Senior PGA Championship.

BH PROMISE

“All of those dollars have been sent directly to the youth of this community,” he said.

Ten Michigan communities were designated Promise Zones in 2009 by then-Gov. Jennifer Granholm, including Benton Harbor Area Schools.

Students living within the school district who graduate from Benton Harbor High School, Dream Academy or Countryside Academy are eligible to receive benefits for up to five years after they graduate. The scholarships cover two years of a community college or approved technical school.

Benton Harbor Promise Chairman Michael Todman said the Benton Harbor Promise is about more than just a scholarship.

“It’s about raising and helping this community as a whole,” he said. “It’s about having an integrated way making sure that all of the folks within this community have the right opportunities

in their future.”

He said in the five years it has existed, the Benton Harbor Promise has awarded \$250,000 in scholarships to 125 scholarship recipients.

The foundation has started doing more than handing out scholarships, said Alloyd Blackmon, Benton Harbor Promise executive director. The foundation has set up programs at high school and college levels to help students succeed.

Blackmon said the foundation piloted an internship program during summer 2014 with seven promise students working at five different businesses. She said the internships were funded by a \$20,000 grant from the Michigan College Access Network.

“Let’s take kids who have specific interests and build a partnership between the students and employers,” she said. “The reason you go to school is so one day you will have a successful career.”

The program worked so well that some of the em-

ployers kept the students employed part-time during the school year, she said.

This summer, she said, 20 promise students will be interns with 12 different businesses.

In addition, Todman said Lake Michigan College is working with the foundation to help the promise students succeed in college in the program Start-To-Finish. He said the program offers academic tutoring, life skills coaching and transportation.

For the high school students, the foundation started the Freshmen 50 in January to help freshmen prepare for either a career or college after graduation, Todman said.

“It’s in coordination with the First Tee and a summer internship program to prepare kids early on ... for getting ready to go to school,” he said.

He said it’s important to show high school students what it’s like in the work environment.

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